

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SAM-01 AF-06 IO-11 OPIC-03

SAJ-01 ACDA-05 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 TRSE-00 OMB-01 COME-00 EB-07

LAB-04 SIL-01 /095 W

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O R 161450Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6381

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1690

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: RC SEES NURSES STRIKE AS PC MANEUVER

REF: LISBON 1604 (DTG 121215Z MAR 76)

SUMMARY: NURSES, NOW ON A PARTIAL WORK STOPPAGE HAVE THREATENED TO GO TO A FULL STRIKE IF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT ACCEDE TO WAGE DEMANDS BY 8:00 P.M. MAR 16. REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL SEES THIS AS PART OF COMMUNIST NAEUVER DESIGNED TO LEAD TO NATIONWIDE LABOR UNREST AND FORCE CANCELLATION OF THE ELECTIONS. COUNCIL HAS DECIDED TO BREAK STRIKE, USING FORCE IF NECESSARY. END
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SUMMARY.

1. NURSES TO STEP UP PRESSURE: STRIKING NURSES HAVE THREATENED THAT THEIR PARTIAL WORK STOPPAGE WILL BECOME TOTAL AT 8:00 P.M. MAR 16 IF THE GOP DOES NOT ACCEDE TO THEIR DEMANDS. PRIMARY DEMAND IS FOR A WAGE INCREASE (REFTEL). GOVERNMENT HAS MADE A WAGE OFFER WHICH NURSES CONSIDER INSUFFICIENT.

2. EFFECT OF STRIKE: THUS FAR STRIKERS HAVE MAINTAINED ESSENTIAL SERVICES; TONIGHT THEY WILL REDUCE TO EMERGENCY SERVICES. HOSPITAL AND EMERGENCY CARE HAS DETERIORATED SIGNIFICANTLY ALREADY, AND THE PRESS HAS CARRIED STORIES OF AT LEAST ONE DEATH ATTRIBUTED TO STRIKE. ANGRY TOWNSPEOPLE IN NORTHERN PORTUGAL BROKE UP A STRIKERS' PICKET LINE.

3. REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL REACTS: A RELIABLE EMBASSY SOURCE REPORTED THAT AT THE MAR 15 REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL MEETING THE RASH OF STRIKES AFFECTING THE COUNTRY WAS DESCRIBED AS PART OF A COMMUNIST PLAN; WORKERS WERE TO PRESS FOR EXAGGERATED WAGE INCREASES, WHICH WOULD LEAD TO A WAVE OF STRIKES THAT WOULD FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO DECLARE A STATE OF SIEGE AND POSTPONE ELECTIONS -- THE ALLEGED PCP OBJECTIVE. ACCEPTING THIS ANALYSIS, THE RC DECIDED TO BREAK THE NURSES STRIKE, USING FORCE IF NECESSARY. WHEN NURSES GO TO FULL STRIKE THIS EVENING, GOVERNMENT WILL SEND IN POLICE TO PREVENT THE PICKETS FROM FUNCTIONING, AND TO PROTECT THE WORKERS WHO STAY ON THE JOB. GOP IS CONVINCED THAT MAJORITY OF HOSPITAL WORKERS WILL SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT IN THIS CONFRONTATION.

4. RC COMMUNIQUE: FOLLOWING ITS MAR 15 MEETING, THE RC ISSUED A STRONGLY WORDED COMMUNIQUE REFERRING TO THE WAVE OF STRIKES AS A THREAT TO ELECTIONS. RC SAID IT WAS DETERMINED TO GUARANTEE THE ELECTIONS, WOULD APPLY THE STRIKE LAW, AND WOULD USE FORCE IF NECESSARY. MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS HAD EARLIER ISSUED SIMILAR STATEMENT SAYING IT WOULD, IF NECESSARY, CALL FOR POLICE AID TO PROTECT RIGHTS OF SICK AND THOSE SEEKING TO WORK.

5. PCP POSITION: PCP-LINING "O DIARIO" OF MAR 16 HAD FRONT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE ARTICLE WITH WORRIED COMMENT POINTING OUT THE UNPREDICTABLE RESULTS OF THE STRIKE AND THE DANGER OF A TOTAL STRIKE LEADING TO "CLASS DIVISIONS." "O DIARIO" NOTED THAT UNPOPULARITY OF THE STRIKE MIGHT BE USED TO JUSTIFY REPRESSION.

6. COMMENT: SINCE NOV 25, PCP HAS ACTED CAUTIOUSLY AND TAKEN NO UNNECESSARY RISKS. A PLAN OF THE TYPE DESCRIBED IN THE RC MEETING WOULD MARK AN IMPORTANT BREAK WITH THIS

POLICY. WE CONSIDER IT UNLIKELY THAT THE
PCP POLICY SHIFT WHICH THE RC ANALYSIS IMPLIES
HAS TAKEN PLACE. THE "O DIARIO" WARNING TO THE
FAITHFUL TENDS TO CONFIRM THIS AND SUGGESTS THAT PCP
ELEMENT IN THE STRIKING NURSES UNION WILL SEEK A
COMPROMISE. HOWEVER, THE PCP, IN THE PAST, HAD SOME
DIFFICULTY IN RESTRAINING ITS LEFT WING AND UNION ELEMENTS.
CARLUCCI

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